

Good afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to speak this afternoon. You have several bills pending that address mandates on municipalities and school districts. I am in support of any bill that in any way limits or suspends mandates on school districts and municipalities while we are in this economic crisis. I want to specifically mention the Governor's Bill - #6388 – *AN ACT PROVIDING MANDATE RELIEF TO MUNICIPALITIES*, and commend the Governor for her strong leadership on this issue. Her bill is a comprehensive treatment to this problem and deserves special consideration.

I would like to focus my comments today on why I suggest that as many mandates as possible be eliminated or suspended for some period of time.

A recent article in the Hartford Courant reports that Hartford Schools may have to eliminate as many as 365 jobs next year. I may have to lay-off as many as 100 or more in my district. I can assure you than none of these positions will come in any mandated program. Instead, 'regular education' programming will be impacted.

I have referred in the past to the problem that I term 'Three Strikes Against Regular Public Education'. Strike One is the inescapable fact that our costs are rising next year. Strike Two comes when state aid is level funded – which amounts to a cut, or is actually reduced further, which is likely in areas beyond ECS. Strike Three is the impact that all of this has on regular public education programming. Thirty (30) percent or more of my school budget is controlled by some form of state, federal or judicial mandate – I simply cannot touch any of those programs. That leaves the remaining seventy (70) percent to absorb any cuts – or fund any mandate.

Thus, when you enact a mandate, as efficacious as it might be, it is funded locally out of the seventy (70) percent side. You might conclude that ECS covers these costs; it does not since our municipalities rightfully view ECS as revenue towards the whole of the budget.

Because of this extra ordinary state and national economic crisis, I know you cannot substantially raise education aid. Therefore, it is imperative that (1) no new unfunded mandates be enacted and (2) as many mandates as possible be suspended for two or three years to provide some economic relief.

How much can this save? When I appeared before your Committee on February 2<sup>nd</sup> I listed several mandates that my staff and I feel should be suspended for the short term. They total nearly \$2M for my district alone. They included:

- In-school suspension [after new legislation \$202,000]
- Tutoring costs for expelled students [\$80,000 – more if an Open Choice student requires tutoring in Hartford – that is \$30,000 for a full year expulsion vs. \$2,500 given to us for that student; cost of Hearing Officer approximately \$20,000 per year],
- Bullying [PBS Training, curriculum development - \$199,500],
- BEST [\$70,000 for mentors and mentor coordinator, substitutes - \$17,000],
- CEUs, other mandated professional development [3 staff days @261,000 = \$783,000, cost for presenters \$85,000, staff oversight \$5300: totals \$882,900],
- Magnet school tuition [\$209,000]
- Manpower to complete certain state reports [\$100,000 + \$150,000 Power School Database for PSIS uploads]

Not all of these issues are before you in pending bills, but my essential point is that school districts and municipalities need economic relief and we need it now. You can provide that relief simply and without expense by suspending existing mandates. Again, no one is arguing, at least I am not arguing, for or against the essential value of any one mandate over another. As CAPSS and others have said, all of these were well intentioned policies. But we simply can't afford everything right now and there has to be some give. Regular public education programming hangs in the balance.

Respectfully,

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